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- Apr 30** **Hal Brands**
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- May 01** **Military Frontiers: A Graduate Student Symposium**
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- May 02** **Military Frontiers: A Graduate Student Symposium**
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Migration and Global Justice Workshop Series

ARASH ABIZADEH

"The Democratic Legitimacy of Border Coercion: Freedom of Association, Territorial Dominion, and Self-Defence"

Monday, April 20, 2015 3:30PM - 5:00PM
Mershon Center for International Security Studies
1501 Neil Ave. Columbus, OH 43201

[Register for this event here](#)

[Read Dr. Abizadeh's associated paper here.](#)

Arash Abizadeh (M.Phil. Oxford, Ph.D. Harvard) is associate professor of political theory at McGill University. His research focusses on democratic theory, cosmopolitanism, nationalism, and identity, and on 17th and 18th century philosophy, especially Hobbes and Rousseau.

Abstract

According to the democratic borders thesis, a state's regime of border control is democratically legitimate only if the laws governing it result from political processes in which both citizens and foreigners can participate. This is because, to be democratically legitimate, the (coercive) exercise of political power must be democratically justified to all subject to it; and both citizens and foreigners are subject to a polity's regime of border control. Abizadeh defends this thesis against three objections. First, it might be argued that legitimate states have the right to close their borders thanks to a collective right of freedom of association, grounded in self-determination. He argues that such an argument, while grounding a negative claim-right against coercively imposed association, fails to establish a liberty-right to coerce others to prevent unwelcome association. Moreover, it misconstrues the proper collective subject of a right of self-determination: not only the persons whom state agents recognize as members, but all persons subject to the coercive exercise of political power. Second, one might object that citizens enjoy rights of dominion over the territory of their state, and may thus unilaterally refuse entry to foreigners. Abizadeh responds that just as property laws, to be democratically legitimate, require democratic justification to those subject to them, so too must democratically legitimate border laws. Finally, one may object that the coercive exercise of political power may sometimes be legitimate even if not democratically legitimate. He concedes this, but argues that the lack of democratic legitimacy imposes dynamic duties to enable democratic legitimization in the future.

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